

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 02341 301206Z

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

-----107214 301210Z /72

O 300940Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8773

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 2341

NODIS CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV RH US UK

SUBJ: RHODESIA: GRAHAM/LOW CONVERSATION WITH MARK CHONA,
LUSAKA, JUNE 29

REF: LUSAKA 2321

1. SUMMARY: MARK CHONA AND PUNABANTU WARNED US OF THE GROWING FORCES WITHIN THE PF OPPOSED TO NEGOTIATIONS BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SMITH'S OFFER OF A MEETING WITH THE PRINCIPALS WAS AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD. IN RETURN WE WARNED THAT THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS WOULD FIGHT HARD AND LONG IF GIVEN NO ALTERNATIVE. CHONA FEELS THAT SMITH'S COMMITMENT TO A CONFERENCE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT; THE OTHERS WILL COME ALONG. THE TWO OF THEM MADE A NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS ON HOW WE COULD BEST PRESENT THE PROPOSAL TO MUGABE, AND ADVISED THAT WE SHOULD INFORM NYERERE AND MACHEL OF SMITH'S OFFER. END SUMMARY.

2. GRAHAM AND I, ACCOMPANIED BY HIGH COMMISSIONER ALLINSON, DISCUSSED THE PROPOSAL FOR A SECRET MEETING OF ALL PARTIES AT THE LEVEL OF PRINCIPALS WITH MARK CHONA AND PUNABANTU ON THURSDAY AFTERNOON FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF. GRAHAM FIRST REVIEWED THE SITUATION WHICH WE HAD FOUND IN RHODESIA, MENTIONING THE DIFFICULTY THE REGIME WAS HAVING IN ENDING THE VIOLENCE AND THE PROBABILITY THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT A SATIS-
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FACTORY ELECTION. AT THE SAME TIME WE STRESSED THE DANGER OF THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS DECIDING THAT IF THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PF THEY WOULD HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO FIGHT. WE SAID THE CEASEFIRE PROGRAM WAS GOING SLOWLY BUT IT WAS HAVING SOME SUCCESS, AND SITHOLE WAS GRADUALLY BUILDING UP AN ARMY OF HIS OWN INSIDE. WE ALSO NOTED THE DANGER OF UNCONTROLLED ELEMENTS FROM BOTH SIDES GROWING IN NUMBER AND STRENGTH,

WITH THE INEVITABLE RESULT OF AGGRAVATING THE SITUATION AND MAKING A NEGOTIATION MORE DIFFICULT.

3. WE DESCRIBED SMITH'S PROPOSAL FOR AN ALL PARTY CONFERENCE WHICH WAS SECRET AT LEAST UNTIL IT WAS HELD. WE SAID WE HAD TOLD NKOMO OF THE OFFER IN THE MORNING AND DESCRIBED HIS RESPONSE (REFTEL).

4. CHONA QUESTIONED US CLOSELY ABOUT SMITH'S WILLINGNESS TO ATTEND SUCH A MEETING. HE STRESSED THAT SMITH WAS THE KEY FIGURE. IF HE CAME THE OTHERS WOULD HAVE TO. THEY WERE UNIMPORTANT ANYWAY. WHEN WE CHALLENGED HIM ON THAT POINT, HE BACKED AWAY, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT SITHOLE HAD SOME FORCES AND MUZOREWA A FOLLOWING INSIDE THE COUNTRY. CHONA SEEMED TO HAVE DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING THAT SMITH HAD AGREED TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE, BUT WHEN HE FINALLY DID ACCEPT IT, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A MAJOR STEP HAD BEEN TAKEN AND THAT IT WAS UP TO NKOMO TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT. NEVERTHELESS CHONA WARNED US THAT THERE WERE "POWERFUL FORCES" WHICH WERE BEGINNING TO QUESTION THE NEED TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS AT ALL AS THOUGH HE BELIEVED THERE WAS STILL SOMETHING FURTHER THAT WE COULD DO WITH SMITH TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS. CHONA GAVE US A LITTLE LECTURE ABOUT UNDERESTIMATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS AND INFLUENCE OF THE GUERRILLA WAR. WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONTINUE TO DO SO. IN RETURN, WE WARNED HIM AGAINST UNDERESTIMATING THE DETERMINATION OF THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS TO FIGHT IF THEY WERE GIVEN NO CHOICE.
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5. AT ONE POINT CHONA SAID THAT HE EXPECTED SMITH WOULD NOW COME TO THEM AND PROPOSE A MEETING WITH NKOMO ALONE TO DISCUSS A DEAL OF SOME KIND. NKOMO WOULD NOT DO THIS, HE SAID. HE WOULD ONLY MEET SMITH AT AN ALL PARTIES MEETING AND DISCUSS NOTHING OUTSIDE THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSAL.

6. WE SHARED WITH CHONA AND PUNABANTU OUR CONCERN THAT MUGABE MIGHT NOT REALLY BE INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATIONS AT THIS POINT AND THAT HE MIGHT LET THE FACT THAT SMITH WAS READY TO MEET WITH THE PRINCIPALS BECAME PUBLIC. THEY BOTH STRESSED THAT THE WAY WE PUT IT TO MUGABE WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT, AND THEY MADE A NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS TO US. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THEY SAID THAT WE SHOULD PLAY DOWN THE ELEMENT OF SECRECY. THEY SUGGESTED INSTEAD THAT WE TALK ABOUT A CONFERENCE WHICH WAS "UNANNOUNCED." WE SAID WE COULD SEE THAT POINT BUT FELT WE STILL HAD TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT PREMATURE PUBLICITY COULD RUIN THE CONFERENCE. SECONDLY, THEY SUGGESTED THAT WE TELL MUGABE THAT SMITH WAS NOW READY TO COME TO AN ALL PARTIES CONFERENCE CALLED BY THE U.S. AND UK AND FOLLOWING ON FROM THE DAR MEETING AS PROPOSED. WE SHOULD SAY THAT THE ONLY CHANGE WAS THAT HE FELT STRONGLY THAT BEFORE A PUBLIC CONFERENCE COULD BE CALLED A PRELIMINARY MEETING OF THE

PRINCIPALS WAS NECESSARY. THIRD, THEY ASKED ABOUT THE LEVEL OF UK/U.S. REPRESENTATION. WE SAID THAT THAT HAD NOT BEEN WORKED OUT; IT DEPENDED ON EVERYONE'S VIEWS. SECRECY WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT IF THE HIGHEST LEVELS WERE INVOLVED. FINALLY, THEY ASKED ABOUT LOCATION. WHEN WE SAID WE WERE THINKING OF TULI IN BOTSWANA, THEY SAID THEY THOUGHT MUGABE WOULD HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY ATTENDING A CONFERENCE AT A LOCATION LIKE THAT. HE WOULD OBJECT TO OVERFLYING SOUTH AFRICA AND RHODESIA. INSTEAD THEY SUGGESTED MBABANE OR SOME OTHER PRIVATE LOCATION IN SWAZILAND. WE THANKED THEM FOR THE SUGGESTIONS AND SAID WE WOULD TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY.

7. AFTER THE MEETING I RETURNED ALONE TO CLEAR UP AN ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM WITH CHONA. HE AND PUNABANTU TOOK THE OCCASION TO
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ADD A FURTHER BIT OF ADVICE. THEY EMPHASIZED THAT THEY THOUGHT A BREAKTHROUGH HAD BEEN ACHIEVED BUT THAT TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF IT WE SHOULD DEFINITELY PRESENT THE PROPOSAL TO BOTH PRESIDENT NYERERE AND PRESIDENT MACHEL. EACH HAD INFLUENCE WITH A DIFFERENT PART OF ZANU. THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROPOSAL AND BACKING FOR IT WAS THUS CRUCIAL. LOW

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, REPORTS, CAT-C, DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS, SECRET MEETINGS, NEGOTIATIONS, CHEROKEE 06/30/78
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LUSAKA02341
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: ///////////////////////////////////////
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: n/a
Format: TEL
From: LUSAKA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978064/aaaaacth.tel
Line Count: 142
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Message ID: 2aa04685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 LUSAKA 2321
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2280430
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA: GRAHAM/LOW CONVERSATION WITH MARK CHONA, LUSAKA, JUNE 29
TAGS: PDEV, RH, US, UK, (GRAHAM, JOHN), (CHONA, MARK), (LOW, STEPHEN), (SMITH, IAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2aa04685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014